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The Credibility of MYSTERIES in
RELIGION Vindicated.

IN A
SERMON

PREACH'D in the
CATHEDRAL CHURCH of
LICHFIELD,

On SUNDAY, *July* 21. 1728.

By WILLIAM BAKER D.D. Fellow of
St. JOHN'S College in CAMBRIDGE,
and *Chaplain* to the Right Honourable
GEORGE EARL of CARDIGAN.

Publiſh'd at the Request of the BAILIFFS
and ALDERMEN *of the City of*
LICHFIELD.

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The Credibility of Miracles in
Religion

IN A
SERMON

LICHTFIELD



Published at the request of the DALLIES
and ALDERMAN of the City of
LONDON

CAMBRIDGE

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TO THE
WORSHIPFULL
THE
BAILIFFS
AND
ALDERMEN
Of the CITY of
LICHFIELD.

GENTLEMEN,

THE very Obliging
and Generous manner
you were unanimously
pleas'd to take, of expressing
your Approbation of this Dif-
course,

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The DEDICATION.

course, lays me under a necessity of complying with your Request in the Publication of it, tho' otherwise neither prepared nor intended for the Press.

BUT how imperfect soever the Discourse it self may appear to be, yet the Doctrine contained in it is indeed most highly deserving of your utmost Esteem and Veneration.

AND I cannot forbear upon this occasion, declaring what a Pleasure it is to me
*
to

The DEDICATION.

to observe, amongst my own Countrymen, and in my Native Place, so commendable a Zeal for our most Holy Religion, especially in these licentious and wicked Times, when its Fundamental and most important Doctrines are openly and publickly Attacked by some, whilst they are Misrepresented and Ridiculed by others.

THAT your Care and Endeavours for the true interest of Religion, and the Publick good, may be rewarded with uninterrupted Blessings upon
You

The DEDICATION.

**You, and your latest Posterity
after You, is the most sincere
Desire and most hearty Pray-
er of**

GENTLEMEN,

Your most obliged, and

most obedient Servant

W. BAKER.



EXOD. XXXIII. 21, 22, 23.

And the Lord said, Behold there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a Rock.

And it shall come to pass, while my Glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the Rock; and will cover thee with mine hand while I pass by.

And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back-parts: but my face shall not be seen.

IN the preceding parts of this Chapter we have an account of a very familiar Conversation that happen'd betwixt God and his Servant *Moses*; Insomuch that *the Lord talked with Moses*, as it is said in the 9th verse, and in the 11th, that *the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a Man speaketh unto his Friend*. A Condescension this, such as is no where recorded, ever to have passed be-

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twixt God and Man, and designed very probably (though that indeed is not expressly asserted) to procure the greater Reverence and Authority to *Moses* amongst the Israelites, who without the most manifest attestations of his Divine Mission, that could be given even by God himself, were too perverse and refractory to pay a due submission to his *Vicegerent*. But whatever was the motive to this extraordinary Familiarity, it embolden'd *Moses* to make a double Request to God, in whose sight he had found such particular Grace and Favour: The former was in behalf of his People, the Israelites; that he would continue, as before, to vouchsafe his *special presence* to them: The latter, the most remarkable, and which more particularly falls under our present consideration, was in behalf of himself, namely, that he would give him a more perfect View, and a fuller Display of his *great Glory*, than ever he had been pleased to do before. *And he said, I beseech thee shew me thy Glory* v. 18. In answer whereunto God was pleased to say in the 20th v. *Thou canst not see my Face: for there shall no Man see me and live.* The request thou makest is more than can be granted thee; it being impossible that my *Face*, i. e. *the full Splendor and Glory of my Majesty*, should ever be seen by any mortal Man, it being too dazzling and resplendent for Human Nature to bear or comprehend. Thus far however I will comply with thy

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Curiosity, *Behold*, saith he, in the words of my Text, *there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a Rock. And it shall come to pass, while my Glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the Rock, and will cover thee with mine hand while I pass by. And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back-parts: but my face shall not be seen.*

FROM these words I shall insist on the following particulars

Ist. ENDEAVOUR to shew what may most probably be meant by the expression in the Text of *seeing the face or glory of God*, and how his *face and back-parts* are to be understood by us.

IIldly. I SHALL enforce the Doctrine that naturally ariseth from the words, namely, that God may and hath revealed some Things, which though *Incomprehensible* to us in this life, yet should and ought to be received and assented to.

IIIldly. I SHALL consider the Objections made against it by the *Deist* and *Unbeliever*, and endeavour to shew the weakness and insufficiency of them.

AND Lastly I shall conclude with a few Reflexions upon the whole.

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1st. THEREFORE I am to shew what may fairly and rationally be meant by the expression in the Text, of *seeing the face or glory of God*, and how his *face and back-parts* are to be understood by us.

THE method God took of conversing with *Moses* about things relating to his People *Israel*, was, as the Old Testament informs us, out of a *Pillar*, sometimes of a *Cloud*, and sometimes of *Fire*. In this *Pillar* was the *Shekinah* or *special Presence of God*, which usually stood at the Door of the Tabernacle, where there had been frequent intercourse betwixt God and *Moses*, and that with far greater freedom and familiarity, than with any other Prophet either before or since. This, one would have thought, was so great an instance of Goodness and Condescension, so clear a communication of God's divine Favour and special Presence to *Moses*, that nothing more could with any shew of decency, have been desired by him. Indeed *Moses* was a Person so approved of God, of such singular Modesty and deference in his whole demeanor, that whatever was amiss in this request, I should rather impute, not so much to any obliquity in *Moses* himself, as to the obstinacy and perverseness of the People he had to deal with, a stiff-necked and untractable Generation of Men, that was never to be pleased, never to be contented, though gratified in every

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every thing they could either ask or think. But be that as it will, the Request made was to this effect, That God would vouchsafe a more full and perfect knowledge of Himself, than ever he had been pleased to do before. Though he had often appeared in the *Cloud* and in the *Fire*, that it seems was not now enough: as he had often *talked with Moses face to face*, so nothing now would satisfy his curiosity but that he must needs *see him face to face* too; the *Cloud* and the *Veil* must be taken away, and he must *see* and be acquainted with the *face* and with the *glory*, with the very *nature* and *essence* of *God*. And as this is the purport of the Request made to God by *Moses*, so by the answer made by God to it, it will evidently appear what is to be meant by the *back-parts* and *face* of *God* in the Text. Since, saith he, thou art so very desirous of *seeing my Glory*, I will gratify thy Curiosity so far as thy Nature is capable of it; *for while my Glory passeth by, I will put thee in the cleft of the Rock, and thou shalt see my back-parts but no Man shall see my face and live*. As long as we are confin'd to this Earthly Tabernacle, we may indeed see the *back-parts* of God, but his *face* cannot be seen; our conceptions of Divine Truths are in the present life short and imperfect, the clearer and fuller view of them is reserved to us for the happiness of the next. *We now see through a glass darkly, but then face to face,*

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now we know in part but then shall we know even as also we are known, as the Apostle expresseth it in his 1st Ep. to the Cor. 13. 12.

HAVING thus explain'd what is most fairly and rationally to be meant by the Expressions in the Text of the *back-parts* and *face of God*, I proceed in the 2d place to enforce the Doctrine that naturally ariseth from the words, namely, that God hath, and may reveal some truths, which tho' *Incomprehensible* to us in this Life, yet should and ought to be received and assented to.

THE caution given by God to *Moses* not to be over-curious in matters above his reach and comprehension, is a proper suggestion to all others, humbly to acquiesce in the Discoveries and Revelations made by him concerning the Mysteries of our Religion, which though obscurely and but *in part* revealed to us, yet are as much as our Natures, under their present frail and imperfect circumstances, are capable of receiving.

THIS *incomprehensibility* of things in this present Life, is occasion'd by the necessary imperfections all human conceptions are subject to in things relating to another Life; we are as *Clay in the hands of the Potter* who may mould and frame us as he pleaseth; It is God that gave us our senses and understandings, and it was in his power to assign the limits of them, to what particular Objects

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jects they were to extend, and how far, and in what measure we were to comprehend them; and it is by no means a reason sufficient to reject a Doctrine, because it is not fully comprehended by us. *Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection.* saith Job, chap. 11. 7. *Behold saith he, God is great, and we know him not, touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out: his Greatness is unsearchable.* ^a *No man can find out the work that God doth from the beginning to the end:* ^b *Tho' a man labour to seek it out, yet shall he not find it. Yea tho' a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it,* ^c *God hath done great things and unsearchable, marvellous things,* ^d *past finding out,* ^e *great things doth he, which we cannot comprehend.* So the Author of the Book of Eccl. ch. 11. 5. *As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God, who maketh all.* O the depth of the riches, saith the Apostle, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! *there is no searching of his understanding.* Rom. 11. 33. ^f *We know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand we his counsel.* ^g *Who knoweth the power of his anger, and the* ^h *thunder of his power who can understand?* ⁱ *How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out? his judgments are*

^a Eccl. 3. 11. ^b Ch. 8. 17. ^c Job. 5. 9. ^d Ch. 9. 10.
^e Ch. 37. 5. ^f Mic. 4. 12. ^g Pf. 90. 11. ^h Job. 26. 14.
ⁱ Rom. 11. 33. ^k Pf. 36. 6. ^a great

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a great Deep. ^a What Man knoweth the things of a Man, save the Spirit of a Man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no Man, but the Spirit of God. ^b We are not able to comprehend what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of God, which passeth all knowledge. ^c Verily O God, thou art a God that hidest thy self, saith Isaiah, and as the Apostle adds, ^d dwelling in the light, which no Man can approach unto.

INDEED the Holy Scripture abounds with almost innumerable Texts to the same purpose; and yet notwithstanding all this, how doth the *Deist* upbraid and ridicule the *Mysterious Doctrines* of our most Holy Religion as not to be *comprehended*, and *unintelligible*. That they cannot be *comprehended* by us we acknowledge, tho' *unintelligible* they are not, since the *Doctrines* of Christianity cannot be said not to be known or understood, because not wholly but in part revealed to us. So far as they are revealed to us, so far we understand them: Could we frame no Ideas at all of such things, they then indeed would be *unintelligible*, but some Ideas we have of them, tho' obscure and imperfect ones, and so far we assent to them as we know and understand them and no farther. Which shews the apparent difference there is betwixt *incomprehensible* and *unintelligible*.

^a 1 Cor. 2. 11. ^b Eph. 3. 18. ^c Ch. 45. 15. ^d 1 Tim. 6. 16.

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MYSTERIES in RELIGION. 9

HAD *Mysteries* been *unintelligible* or *unconceiveable* in themselves, God could never have revealed them to us; the truths revealed are fully comprehended by God himself, and all he requires from us is so far to give our assents to them, as the imperfections of our nature will admit.

THE distinction we meet with of some Doctrines being *above*, some *contrary* to our reason doth most appositly fall in in this place; A Doctrine reveal'd, if implying a contradiction, or contrary to the received principles of our reason must and ought to be rejected by us. But if the object of it be only disproportionate to our understandings, and the manner *how* it is so cannot possibly be conceived by us, as is the case of all *Mysterious Doctrines*: such truths being not *contrary* to, but only *above* our reason, they may without any scruple be received by us. 'Tis enough for us that the truth of the Doctrine hath been reveal'd by God, nothing being more evident then that whatever God declares, must be true; tho' the manner *how* 'tis true may still remain a secret to us. Thus our own Reason informs us, that there can be but *one Divine Nature*, and yet it is reveal'd to us in Holy Scripture, that *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are one God*. It is not *contrary* to our Reason, tho' it be *above* it, that each of them should be distinctly God, and consequently

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quently that these *Three* should be but *One*. We assent to this Truth upon the Testimony of God, he having thought fit to reveal it; tho' the manner *how* 'tis true be hidden from us; and must continue to be so, till our faculties are enlarged, and we are translated into those blessed Regions, where all such *Mysteries* will be clear'd up to us. We have light sufficient to guide us in the ways of our duty here, and to conduct us to eternal Happiness hereafter. As God hath supply'd our wants, and reliev'd our necessities, it is of no great moment whether he will gratify our *curiosity* or no. We ought to be thankful that we know so much, rather than to be dissatisfy'd that we know no more, rather to improve to pious and religious purposes the light that hath been given us, than to murmur and repine, because it is no greater; with all deference and humility to embrace the great *Mysteries* of our most Holy Religion, and adore those Truths we cannot comprehend.

BUT that no light may be wanting that can be afforded us in so abstruse a point as this is, I shall descend in the 3^d place to consider the objections made against it by the *Deist* and *Unbeliever*, and endeavour to shew the weakness and insufficiency of them.

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Doctrin

MYSTERIES in RELIGION. 11

Doctrine I have chose to instance in, is in the 1st place, that whatever is *incomprehensible* is *as to us* in all appearance *false* too; at least that we can give no assent either to the truth or falshood of it, as long as it continues to remain so. And are we then to pronounce every thing to be *false*, that we do not perfectly understand? Sure it is that what is unintelligible at one time may be intelligible at another. Thus some things are more clearly reveal'd to us than they were to our fore-fathers before and under the Jewish Dispensation. What was obscure, and in a manner incomprehensible to them, is to us made clear, discernable and plain. Jesus Christ hath brought *life and immortality to light thro' the Gospel*; Our comprehension of things being much improv'd by the Revelation that hath been given us. So the Apostle argues, ^a *God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath now shined in our hearts, and ^b called us out of Darkness into his marvellous light. For we that before had our ^c understandings darkned and were alienated from the life of God, thro' the ignorance that was in us, have now received the ^d knowledge of the truth: Unto us is given to know the ^e Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. ^f Now is made manifest to all Nations the Mystery which was kept secret since the world began, even the ^g hidden wisdom*

^a 2 Cor. 4. 6. ^b 1 Pet. 2. 9. ^c Eph. 4. 18. ^d Heb. 10. 26. ^e Mat. 13. 11. ^f Rom. 16. 25, 26. ^g 1 Cor. 2. 7.

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of God. * For now we know that the Son of God^s is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and be in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. We have a more clear and better view of things than our Fore-fathers that were before us, the eyes of our Understandings being Enlighten'd by the clearer Revelation made to us. And as many things are clear to us, which our Fore-fathers had but an obscure glympse of, so many things are incomprehensible to us in this Life, which may be easily apprehended by us in the next; as there are many things not discernable to us in our Infant-state, which are easily discover'd in our riper years. So that the present *incomprehensibility* of the *Mysterious Doctrines* of the Christian Religion is no argument at all against the truth of them. In common Life we cannot but observe the vast difference there is in the parts and capacities of one Man above another; An abstruse point shall by some Men be quickly discern'd and seen into, which by others of slow and inferior capacities is not by the utmost study and industry ever to be understood. And as some difficult abstruse Truths are actually comprehended by some Men, which are incomprehensible to others, so no doubt the *Blessed Angels*, who are Beings of a superior order to all human Creatures, are by their enjoyment of the *Beatific Vision*,

* 1 Joh. 5. 20.

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let into the knowledge of some *Mysterious Truths*, such as are undiscernable by mortal Eye. It is therefore by God alone, because he alone is of infinite Perfection and Knowledge, that every the most *Mysterious Truth* is comprehended. *The Spirit of God searcheth the deep things of God: The things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God.* 1 COR. 10. 11. So that no human knowledge whatsoever can be the standard of Truth or Falshood, and a *Mystery* may be *true*, tho' not *comprehensible* to our finite capacities in this Life.

BUT supposing barely that it may be true, tho' not to be comprehended in the present state, yet the *Infidel* carries the objection still further, denying in the 2^d place that any *sufficient evidence* can be given of it, and where no *sufficient evidence* can be had of any matter, it is the same thing to him as if it were really *false*.

NOW the fallacy of this reasoning will be easily made appear by fixing the proper limits to what the *Infidel* calls his *sufficient Evidence*.

TO have demonstrative Evidence of the truth of a Proposition, it is not necessary that we be able to answer every perplexing difficulty that may be rais'd about it. TO begin with an instance in the visible Creation.

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It is capable of Demonstration that Matter was not from all Eternity, and that consequently it must have been created; We are certain too that the parts of Matter are mutually connected and join'd together. This is so evident at first sight that no rational Man makes any doubt or scruple about it; and yet the manner *how* a thing can be created, or *how* its parts are so join'd and connected together, is, and always will be out of the reach of Human Comprehension. In things relating to this World we assent to numberless Propositions, which cannot be entirely cleared up, and must the same privilege be denied us in Religious matters? Thus St. Paul argues in the great *Mystery* of the *Resurrection*. Behold, saith he, in his 1 Ep. to the Cor. 15. 51. and 52. verses, *I shew you a Mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a Moment, in the twinkling of an Eye, at the last Trump, (for the Trumpet shall sound) and the Dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.* So likewise St. John in his 1 Ep. 3. 2. Behold, saith he, *now are we the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* We assent to these *Mysteries* of our great *Change* and *Similitude to Christ* at the *Resurrection* upon the testimony of God, who hath revealed them to us. Had these never been revealed, we
could

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could not have conceived any notion at all of them, and now they are revealed, it is not necessary before we give our assent to the truth of them, that we be able to discover what this great *Change* of ours shall be, and wherein our being *like to Christ* shall consist. We have sufficient Evidence for both, as proceeding from God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. And tho' great difficulties may be started about the manner of this *Change* and how our *Similitude with Christ* can be accounted for, yet we may rest satisfied, that so it will be, since * *God is faithful who hath Promised, neither shall there fail one word of all his good Promises. His words are true, and his † counsels are faithfulness and truth: The word that he shall speak shall come to pass; He will say the word and will perform it. ‡*

BUT Lastly, if, as the *Deist* contends, no evidence is sufficient, where some difficulties remain unanswerable, the good Man will be divested of all motives to Obedience in this life, and all hopes of Happiness in the next. Thus God hath declared that the good Man shall be *rewarded* in another life; this quickens him in his Duty in prospect of the *reward* God hath so graciously promised him: 'Tis true indeed he cannot explain what the *reward promised* shall be, nor solve all the difficulties relating to it, yet still he has Evidence

* Heb. 11. 11. † Isa. 25. 1. ‡ Ez. 12. 25.

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sufficient that ^ahis labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. ^bHath God said it and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good. ^cI have spoken it, saith the Lord, I will also bring it to pass, I have purposed it, I will also do it: ^dI will not repent, neither will I turn back from it.

BUT Lastly, what the *Deist* hath to urge in the last place, is, that he cannot be persuaded that a good God can deal so *unreasonably* with his Creatures, as to expose them to difficulties without cause, to reveal a Religion *mysterious* and *obscure*, which he might as well have made *plain* and *easy*. Indeed had God required any thing of his Creatures either repugnant to, or inconsistent with their *Reason*, they might have complain'd of him as an *hard Master*, requiring *Brick where there was no Straw*, but the case, we know, is quite otherwise. No Doctrine whatsoever, that is apparently absurd, that after due examination, appears repugnant to our *Reason*, is to be received by us under the notion of a *Mystery*. Before we embrace any Religious Doctrine, we are obliged to consult, not deny our *Reason*, and nothing can possibly be the Object of our Faith, that hath any thing in it contradictory thereto. 'Tis upon this account our *Church* rejects the Doctrine of

^a 1 Cor. 15. 58.
^d Jer. 14. 28.

^b Numb. 23. 19.

^c Isa. 46. 11.

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Transubstantiation, tho' professed by the *Romish* under the notion of a *Mystery*; and that because of the manifest repugnancy it bears both to *Sense* and *Reason*. How plausible soever the pretence be of its being a Doctrine revealed in Scripture; yet containing, as we apprehend, a plain and manifest contradiction in it, we disclaim and reject it as erroneous and false, and absolutely impossible to be taught by God.

How is it then that God acts *unreasonably* with his Creatures in revealing a *Mysterious Religion* to them? Since as *Mysterious* as it is, yet it contains nothing *contrary* to our *Reason*, and the more sublime its *Mysteries* are, the nobler Entertainment doth it afford of our best and most exalted *Reason*. Had the Christian Religion been so plain and easy as the *Deist* would have it, God's Revelations to us must have been confined within a narrow compass; nothing must have been told us relating to the *perfections of his own Nature*, nor to the *things of another World*; the contemplation whereof, tho' *Mysterious*, and *but in part* revealed to us, is the noblest Entertainment for the rational Mind even in this life, and the most real Happiness it is capable of enjoying. It is therefore the pure Issue of his abundant goodness, so far is God from dealing *unreasonably* with his Creatures, that he hath made such *noble* and *sublime Truths*

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the subject matter of his Revelations to them. He was not oblig'd in strict Justice to give us any Revelation at all, much less in that perfection the *Deist* would have it, supposing our natures capable of receiving it; and since God never doth any thing without sufficient *reason* he should be cautious in pronouncing every thing *unreasonable* that he doth not or cannot see the *reason* of. * *For thinkest thou that God is such an one as thy self? † his ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts: But as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts.*

BUT Lastly, I shall conclude with a few *Reflexions* upon the whole.

AND 1st, If, as hath been made appear, God hath and may reveal some things, which tho' *incomprehensible* to us in this Life, yet should and ought to be assented to, then we should be the more cautious of forming lofty conceptions of our selves or accomplishments, nor so rash as to set our *Reason* above *Revelation*, our weak imperfect acquirements in *human Wisdom*, above the Sublime, *Mysterious* and most important *Doctrines* of God's Holy word; nor place any confidence in the lesser Truths, if we may call 'em so, of human Wisdom and vain Philosophy, any fur-

* Ps. 150. 21.

† Isa. 55. 8, 9.

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MYSTERIES *in* RELIGION. 19

ther than as subservient to those infinitely far superior ones of Holy Scripture, the only real fountain of true Wisdom and solid satisfaction; nor should we so far value ourselves upon the mighty force of our own reasonings, as to reject things of a more sublime nature, because *above*, and in appearance only *contrary* to that *Reason* we so much boast of, and are apt to make such a noise about. *Revelation* we are sure, is founded upon the Veracity of God himself, and whatever comes immediately from him must be certain and evident beyond dispute; whereas the best Argument we can have that our imperfect Reasonings have any thing at all of certainty in them, is because they are as *Rays* proceeding from that Eternal fountain of *Light, the Author and giver of all good gifts*. So that indeed the best use we can possibly make of them, is with all Modesty and Humility to resign and submit them to the reveal'd dictates of God's most Holy Word, the proper standard of true Wisdom and Knowledge, the only rule we may safely walk by and acquiesce in, and conform our lives and actions to. The *Reason* of Man, however valued and applauded by us, must act in subordination to God, and we never do any thing more agreeably to *Reason*, nor govern our understandings so well, as when we submit our imperfect conceptions to the most perfect and enlighten'd understanding; there

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being nothing more evident than that our *Reason* cannot err, when it resigns it self to God, who is the supreme and most *infallible Reason*.

BUT 2dly, What I would observe further upon the case is this. That it is not only upon the Authority of God enjoying it, that *Mysterious Doctrines* are to be assented to, but because the frame of Christianity necessarily requires that there should be *Mysteries*; and consequently it is impossible that the Doctrines thereof should be so *plain* and *easy*, as the *Deist* would insinuate that they might have been. Had our first Parents conducted themselves according to the light that Nature had given them, had they never fallen from their original state of Innocence and Knowledge in which they were created; then indeed the whole Oeconomy of things might have been quite different; not only no *Mysterious Doctrines* reveal'd to us in the *Gospel*, but no occasion for any *Gospel* at all; *Natural Light* would have been sufficient, and no *Mysteries* necessary to be superadded to or join'd with it. But the face of things is much alter'd, and to reinstate us in the favour of God anew, the *Mystery* of our *Redemption* became necessary, *that the Son of God should be made Flesh, that he should suffer in our Nature and dye for us*: there was an absolute necessity of a *Propitiatory Sacrifice* and
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of an *infinite Satisfaction*, things which now so puzzle and amuse your fine *Reasoners*, and perplex, and discompose the Atheistical and unbelieving part of the World. Immediately upon our transgression some satisfaction became necessary to an offended God; It was impossible that a finite Sacrifice, that the blood of Bulls or Goats should make satisfaction to infinite Justice, so that the Son of God incarnate became necessary to procure for us a Redemption, which no less a Sacrifice could possibly have accomplish'd.

BUT Lastly; The last Reflexion I shall make upon the whole shall be this. That were there no other reason for revealing *Mysteries*, yet the design of God is sufficiently vindicated, because they are the most prevailing Motive to our Obedience, and a very great incitement to Virtue and Holiness. Indeed the *Deist* affirms that it being impossible that any proper Ideas can be had in this life of things relating to another World, 'tis to no purpose to reveal any thing about them, since the Objects of Sense and Reason would have done as well without any reference to any thing beyond them. But how imperfect soever our notions may be of the Rewards and Happiness of a future life, which God hath no otherwise revealed to us than by *analogy* and *likeness* to the things of this World; tho' the *Resurrection* of our Bodies at the final
Judg.

Judgment, our *likeness to Christ*, and the glorious *Change* they shall then receive, be at present obscure and *Mysterious* to us, yet the discovery of them even thus far is highly expedient to make us good and *virtuous*, to *press forward towards the mark for the prize of the high-calling of God in Christ Jesus*. For tho' we were never so well convinced of the native beauty and excellence of *Virtue*, yet that would not avail us much, to restrain the unruly inclinations of our Nature; the most it could do, would be to raise our admiration, but without the Revelation of a future Resurrection, and the Glories and Happiness of another life, it could contribute but little towards influencing our Practice. So that how amiable soever *Virtue* may be in it self, and however to be pursued and embraced for its own sake, yet the Scripture tells us that *Moses had respect unto the Recompence of the Reward*; and our Saviour himself for the Joy that was set before him *endur'd the Cross and despis'd the Shame*. Heb. 12. 2.

As absurd therefore as the *Mysteries* of the Gospel may be represented to us by the *Deist* and *Unbeliever*, let us look upon them in another view, not as design'd to puzzle and confound us, but as the most inviting motives to Holiness and Virtue, as *Mysteries* of love and mercy to us; and therefore out of love to our selves, and gratitude to the great
Reveal-

MYSTERIES *in* RELIGION. 23

Revealer of them, let us with joy and thankfulness believe and espouse them. This is a *Faith* best becoming our *reasonable Nature*, and such as we ought all to labour for; such as will remove all *Scepticism* from our *Understandings* and *Wickedness* from our *Wills*; such as will carry us thro' all Temptations here, and crown us with *Glory* and *Immortality* hereafter; and tho' at present attended with some insuperable Difficulties, arising from the infirmities and imperfections of our Nature, yet the *Beatific Vision* will shortly come, which will unravel all, and bring us to the fruition of *Father Son and Holy Ghost, three Persons and one God, to whom be all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, now and for evermore.*
Amen.

F I N I S.

MYSTERY IN RELIGION. 23

Recalls of them, let us with joy and thank-
 fulness believe and espouse them. This is a
 Faith self becoming our reasonable Nature,
 and such as we ought all to labour for; such
 as will remove all superstitions from our Under-
 standings and Weaknesses from our Wills; such
 as will carry us thro' all Temptations here,
 and crown us with Glory and Immortality here-
 after; and the same attended with some
 insuperable Difficulties arising from the in-
 finities and imperfections of our Nature, yet
 the blessed Spirit will thro' grace, which
 will unravel all, and bring us to the fruition
 of Father Son and Holy Ghost, those Persons
 and one God, to whom be all Honour and Glory,
 Dominion and Power, now and for evermore.
 Amen.



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